



News Release

For Immediate Release

Monday, April 26, 2004

Contact:

Rebecca Ward

Utah Immunization Program

Office: 801-538-6682

Immunizations for a Healthy Mind and Body

“Love Them, Protect Them” Event Kicks Off Infant Immunization Week

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Governor Olene Walker kicked off National Infant Immunization Week (April 25-May 1) by reading to a group of immunized children at the Main Salt Lake Library today. The “Love Them, Protect Them” immunization event highlighted two other important issues for children, healthy nutrition and reading, and showed how they can help get more Utah children immunized.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is offering a free book to parents on the WIC Program (Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program) when their child is adequately immunized. Each child who is less than two years of age, enrolled in WIC, and is current on immunizations receives a book titled “I Love You As Much,” by Laura Krauss Melmed.

“It’s a winning combination,” said Governor Walker. “Children are better protected with immunizations and parents are encouraged to develop children’s reading skills.” Walker emphasized the correlation between a strong mind and a strong body. “It’s important that we implement effective strategies to increase immunization levels so that infants and children in Utah can be healthy and reach their fullest potential,” Walker added.

Utah’s child immunization levels have increased from 66 percent in 1999 to the current 77.4 percent, but there is still room for improvement, according to health officials. Last year, about 49,000 babies are born in Utah, and approximately 20 percent of those are not adequately immunized during their first two years of life.

- MORE -

Page 2 of 2 –Immunizations for a healthy mind and body

Although immunization levels in Utah are high or near record highs for most vaccines, disease-causing viruses and bacteria are still circulating – either at low levels in the United States or elsewhere in the world. Those diseases not currently circulating in this country are only a plane ride away.

In recognition of National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), several counties and local immunization coalitions across Utah will hold activities for children in childcare settings, WIC clinics, community health centers, recreational centers, libraries, schools and health departments.

To participate in NIIW events, contact the Utah Immunization Program at (801) 538-9450 or your local health department. For more information on immunization, call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

#

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.